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ABSTRACT

This regional dossier aims to provide concise, descriptive information and basic educational statistics about minority language education in a specific region of the European Union--Northern Ireland. Details are provided about the features of the educational system, recent educational policies, divisions of responsibilities, main actors, legal arrangements, support structures, and qualitative information on a number of schools, teachers, pupils, and financial investments. This information is designed to serve the needs of policy makers, researchers, teachers, students, and journalists as they assess the developments in European minority language schooling. This information may also serve as a first orientation towards further research (additional readings are suggested and contact information provided). Specifically, information is provided on preschool, primary, secondary, vocational, higher, and adult education, as well as a review of educational research, summary statistics, and overall prospects for the use of the language under study. The subject of this dossier is Irish. It is a Celtic language closely related to Scottish Gaelic and Manx, and more distantly related to Welsh, Breton, and Cornish. According to a 1991 census, there are nearly 80,000 people in Northern Ireland who can speak, read, and write Irish and over 45,000 who can speak the language--about 10% of the total population of Northern Ireland. (Contains 22 references.) (KFT)

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The Irish language in education in Northern Ireland

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This regional dossier was established by Adalgard Willemsma (editor) and Aodán Mac Póilin from Ultach Trust/Ointaobhas Ultach in 1997. Data reflect the situation in 1996, unless stated otherwise.

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Foreword

background

For several years now, Mercator-Education has been working to achieve one of its principal goals: to gather, store and distribute information on minority language education in European regions. Regional or minority languages are languages that are traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population and which differ from the official language of that State.[1] To date, Mercator-Education has been successful in establishing a computerized data bank containing bibliographic data, information about persons and organisations involved with minority language issues, and data collected during four inventory studies on pre-school education (Goot, Renkema & Stuijt, 1994), primary education (Sikma & Gorter, 1991), learning materials (Tjeerdsma & Sikma, 1994) and teacher training (Dekkers, 1995). In addition there is a need for documents stating in brief the most essential features of the education system of regions with an autochthonous lesser used language. With the establishment of regional dossiers it is intended to meet this need.

aim

Regional dossiers aim at providing concise descriptive information and basic educational statistics about minority language education in a specific region of the European Union. This kind of information, such as features of the education system, recent educational policies, division of responsibilities, main actors, legal arrangements, support structures, and also quantitative information on the number of schools, teachers, pupils and financial investments, can serve several purposes.

target group

Policy makers, researchers, teachers, students and journalists may use the information provided to assess developments in European minority language schooling. They can also use a regional dossier as a first orientation towards further research (further reading and addresses are

included) or as a source of ideas for improving educational provisions in their own region.

link with EURYDICE

In order to link these regional descriptions with those of national education systems, it was decided to follow the format used by Eurydice, the European education information network. Eurydice provides information on the administration and structure of all levels of education in Member States of the European Union. [2] The information provided in the regional dossiers is focused on language use at the various levels of education.

contents

The remainder of this dossier consists firstly of an introduction to the region under study, followed by six sections each dealing with a specific level of the education system. Sections eight to ten cover research, prospects and summary statistics. These brief descriptions contain factual information presented in a readily accessible way. For detailed information and political discussions about language use at the various levels of education, the reader is referred to other sources.

1 Introduction

language

Irish, or Gaeilge, is an autochthonous language spoken in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom. It is a Celtic language closely related to Scottish Gaelic and Manx, and more distantly related to Welsh, Breton and Cornish. According to the 1991 Census there are 79,012 people in Northern Ireland who are able to speak, read and write Irish, and 45,338 claiming to speak the language. Of the total population in Northern Ireland aged three and over with some knowledge of Irish - who can speak, read and/or write Irish to an unspecified extent - is 142,003, which constitutes around ten percent of the population of Northern Ireland.[3]

status

The United Kingdom consists of Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England.[4] Northern Ireland was founded in 1921. Before 1921, Irish was recognised as a school subject and, as "Celtic" in some third level institutions. This policy continued in spite of some attempts in the 1930s to restrict it further in the curriculum. Between 1921 and 1972 Northern Ireland had a measure of devolved government. During those years one party, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), which was hostile to the Irish language, was in power in the Northern Ireland Parliament. Since 1972, Northern Ireland has been ruled directly from Westminster, London. Irish is not recognised as an official language in Northern Ireland, although some public funding is available for Irish-language projects. The Government recognises that the Irish language is perceived by many people in Northern Ireland as an important part of their cultural heritage. This means in practical terms that Government will respond positively, to soundly based requests for assistance. Language activists continue to campaign for a more positive and pro-active approach of the government on supporting the language.

Irish speaking community

Although Irish was used by a number of residual communities of native speakers in Northern Ireland when the state was founded in 1921, none of these communities did survive. At present, the Irish-speaking community in Northern Ireland consists of those who have learned Irish as a second language in secondary school, university, or at night classes, children who have been brought up with Irish as their first language (often by parents who themselves were learners of the language), and an increasing number of children from English-speaking homes who are being educated through the medium of Irish in Irish-medium schools. While this community is scattered throughout Northern Ireland, it is more concentrated in cities and larger towns (Andrews, 1994a).

education system

The education system in Northern Ireland differs from those of England, Wales and Scotland in some respects, although it shares a few basic principles, including that of compulsory education for all children between the ages of 5

(year 1) and 16 (year 12). In principle, educational provision should be free, but some schools which do not fit the educational or numerical criteria laid down by government are not funded.

administration

Overall responsibility for all aspects of state-funded (also called grant-aided) education in Northern Ireland lies with the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI). Since the Northern Ireland Parliament was discontinued in 1972, DENI is the responsibility of a Minister of State in the Northern Ireland Office who is directly appointed by the UK government in London. DENI formulates educational policy in Northern Ireland, and all major funding decisions lie with the Department.

Education and Library Board

At local level, educational provision, involving both capital and running costs, is administered by Education and Library Boards (ELBs) which are funded by DENI. There are at present five ELBs, one per county, but it is proposed to reduce this number to three. ELBs manage some schools, and are the channel for the funding of others. They are also responsible for the provision of inservice teacher training and resources.

inspection

Within DENI, the Education and Training Inspectorate is responsible for inspecting schools, assessing the quality of education at all levels of the statutory education system and advising the Department on issues relating to standards.

curriculum and assessment

All state-funded schools in Northern Ireland are expected to follow the statutory Common Curriculum, established in 1989. The Common Curriculum is slightly different from the National Curriculum in England and Wales. Years 1 to 12 of compulsory education are divided into primary level (years 1-7), and secondary level (years 8-12). Each level is divided into two keystages. The first three years at primary level are keystage 1 and the second three years are keystage 2 (years 4-7). At secondary level you have keystage 3 (years 8-10) and keystage 4 (years 11-12). Pupils are assessed at the end of each keystage in core curriculum subjects, and also have to study a number of other

compulsory subjects. Two cross-curricular themes, Cultural Heritage and Education for Mutual Understanding, must also be provided. The Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), established in 1994, is responsible for keeping under review all aspects of assessment and the curriculum, as well as overseeing the setting and marking of examinations.

examinations

Secondary education in Northern Ireland is selective. A competitive Transfer Examination is available in the last year of a child's primary education for those children seeking places in grammar schools at secondary level. A public examination, the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) is usually taken in year 12 at the age of 16, at the end of Keystage 4. A further examination, the General Certificate of Education at Advanced Level (GCE 'A' Level) is usually taken two years after the end of compulsory education. A new examination (GCE AS), regarded as intermediate between GCSE and GCE 'A' Level, has recently been introduced. All the secondary level examinations are also open to adult students.

types of schools

There are a few (18) independent (non-funded) schools which cater for a very small proportion of the total school population and which receive no financial assistance from public funds. The vast majority of schools are state-funded, and managed by Boards of Governors, all of which have teacher and parent representatives. However, state-funded schools, which reflect the history of denominational education in Northern Ireland, fall into a bewildering range of sub-sections, depending on their background, management structure and funding mechanism. The following are the main sub-divisions.

controlled schools

Controlled schools, both primary and secondary (including some grammar schools), are managed directly by ELBs through Boards of Governors. These Boards of Governors have representatives appointed by the ELBs and (often) representatives appointed by the original owners (mainly the Protestant Churches) known as "transferrers". Capital and running costs are met in full.

voluntary maintained schools

Voluntary maintained schools, at both primary and secondary levels, are managed by Boards of Governors which include members nominated by trustees and ELBs. Running costs are met in full and are administered by the ELBs. Approved capital building costs are state-funded up to 85% by DENI. Most voluntary maintained schools are within the Catholic maintained sector. Since 1989, planning and development support for the Catholic maintained sector has been the responsibility of the government-funded Catholic Council for Maintained Schools (CCMS), which also oversees the appointment of trustees.

voluntary grammar schools

Voluntary grammar schools are permitted to select pupils on the basis of their ability and tend to concentrate on preparing pupils aged 11 - 18 for courses in further or higher education. Both Catholic and Protestant schools are involved. The structure of their Boards of Governors vary widely, sometimes including members appointed by ELBs or DENI. Approved capital expenditure attracts grant of up to 85% from DENI. Running costs are administered directly by DENI.

new voluntary schools

Legislation to create a new category of voluntary school to harmonise provision for the voluntary sector was introduced in November 1993. This allows existing voluntary maintained schools and voluntary grammar schools to opt for designation as a new category of voluntary school which will be eligible for 100% capital grant. An increasing number of voluntary schools are in this category.

integrated schools

The category of integrated schools aims to educate Catholic and Protestant children together. Integrated schools include both Controlled Integrated, (funded by the ELBs) and Grant-Maintained Integrated (funded directly by DENI). Since 1989 DENI has had a statutory duty to "encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education", and has helped found a new charitable trust known as the Integrated Education Fund. Development support for integrated education comes from the Northern Ireland

Council for Integrated Education, which has less influence on school policy than CCMS. Both kinds of Integrated schools are eligible for 100% grants for approved running costs and capital expenditure. Legislation has been introduced to enable schools in the controlled and voluntary sectors to transfer to the integrated sector.

Irish-medium schools

A large proportion of Irish-medium schools in Northern Ireland are independent schools which do not receive funding from the state, although some now receive interim support from the *European Union's Programme for Peace and Reconciliation* which is administered by DENI, and others in the Belfast area have received interim funding from Making Belfast Work, a government body with responsibility for the social and economic regeneration of Belfast. State-funded Irish-medium schools are all in the voluntary maintained sector. One voluntary maintained Irish-medium school and one Irish-medium stream belong to the Catholic maintained sector, and are members of CCMS. The Boards of Governors of the other state-funded Irish-medium schools are appointed mainly by the parent bodies, with ELB representation. Some state-funded and independent Irish-medium schools at primary and secondary levels, as well as a number of Irish-medium preschool playgroups, are affiliated to a voluntary organisation, *Gaeloiliúint*, which has recently been given a small grant to develop Irish-medium education. This grant is funded by the EU's *Programme for Peace and Reconciliation*.

In the following sections the use and position of Irish in the educational system of Northern Ireland is discussed in more detail.[5]

2 Preschool education

target group

Irish-medium preschool education is in the main directed at children (aged 2 to 4) from English-speaking homes, whose parents are considering primary education through the medium of Irish for their children. Preschool provision falls outside the ages of compulsory education in Northern

Ireland, which starts in the year of the child's fifth birthday. Two types of preschool provision are available.

nursery provision

State-funded nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools are financed on a not strictly regulated basis by DENI. They are staffed by qualified teachers who have the ongoing support of the local ELBs and may use their inservice facilities. The Irish-medium community has argued that state-funded nursery provision is necessary to enable children from English-speaking homes to deal with the statutory curriculum needs of Irish-medium primary schools. However, no provision has yet been made for Irish-medium nursery education.

playgroups

Playgroups are entirely voluntary and fall outside mainstream educational provision. They receive no funding and fall within the remit of the Department of Health and Social Services. Before 1997 qualifications for playgroup staff were not necessary.

statistics

The first Irish-medium preschool playgroup was established in Belfast in 1978 with 7 children. There are currently 19 Irish-medium playgroups (1996-1997) attended by a total of 548 children. There are 8 in Belfast and 3 in Derry/ London-Derry, the two largest cities, and an increasing number in smaller urban and rural areas. A number of new Irish-medium preschools are planned. In 1995, English-medium preschool provision included 634 registered playgroups, 91 nursery schools and 66 nursery classes.

Irish medium

All Irish-medium preschool provision is provided by playgroups. Through a structured second-language immersion programme they enable children to acquire a level of Irish which is sufficient to prepare them for entry to Irish medium primary education. An equally important function is to provide, through the provision of carefully selected play materials and activities, a wide range of other relevant learning experiences for the child.

language use

The language used by the teachers in Irish-medium preschool playgroups is Irish. The majority of staff will

have learnt Irish as a second language. Because of lack of financial support, not all staff have the prefered competencies such as specialist skills in general and/or bilingual preschool education.

staff training

Although preschool second-language immersion requires a high level of skill, staff involved in Irish-medium preschool playgroups were not required in the past to have any formal linguistic or pedagogical qualifications. A part-time regional advisor appointed in 1989 by the Dublin-based preschool organisation, *An Comhchoiste Réamhscolaíochta*, provided training in the form of weekend courses and workshops. In 1996, *Altram*, an Irish-medium preschool education development and training organisation, was established, and received a small government grant. *Altram* aims to develop a common strategy, to address funding and development issues, to assist staff development, to facilitate parental and community involvement and to encourage respect for cultural diversity. The organisation delivers courses aimed at National Vocational Qualifications for preschool staff. This qualification will be compulsory for playgroup staff from January 1997. *Gaeloiliúint* also offered a training course in 1995-1996.

3 Primary education

background

The first Irish-medium primary school was established in Belfast in 1971 with 9 children. It originally catered for children from Irish-speaking homes. Children from English-speaking families began to attend in 1979 and the school received state-funding in 1984. This school supports a state-funded satellite school on a three-year trial basis. A state-funded stream was established in a Catholic maintained school in 1983, and developed into a free-standing school in 1993. A second Irish-medium school in Belfast received funding in 1992, five years after it was established, a third school in Belfast was state-funded in 1996, and another will receive grant-aid in April 1997. A school in Newry established in 1987 will receive funding in August 1997. In 1994, a second state-funded stream was

established in Armagh within a Catholic maintained school. Four other schools, in Maghera, Dunloy, Belfast and Coalisland, were not in receipt of grant-aid, or the promise of grant-aid, in 1996. Interim funding has been made available through the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation for 4 schools in 1996-1997.

statistics

There are 10 Irish-medium free-standing primary schools in Northern Ireland. Only four of them were state-funded in 1996, although a further two schools have been promised funding in April and August 1997. There is one state-funded Irish-medium stream in an English-medium school and one school is funded as a satellite of an existing Irish-medium school. The Irish-medium primary schools, including the stream and satellite, had an enrolment of 1,017 in 1996-1997. In 1995, the total enrolment of English-medium primary schools was 190,787 divided over 948 primary schools.

funding

There are two criteria for the state-funding of Irish-medium primary schools. Firstly, a school must provide an acceptable standard of education. Secondly, a school must prove its long-term enrolment viability, which currently refers to a school's potential to achieve an ultimate enrolment of 100 children, or a sustained intake of 14/15 children per annum. DENI is at present reviewing the viability criteria for Irish-medium schools. DENI proposes that new Irish-medium primary schools will be expected to achieve a first year intake of 25 pupils and demonstrate that they can sustain a long-term enrolment within the range of 150 -175 pupils. This increase will have a negative impact on the growth of free-standing Irish-medium primary schools particularly in areas outside Belfast and Derry.

Irish-medium streams

DENI's current policy is to encourage Irish-medium streams in English-medium schools rather than free-standing Irish-medium schools, largely for economic considerations. The Irish language community has reservations concerning Irish-medium streams, except where they are unavoidable. In their opinion streams do not have autonomy within an English-speaking school to

develop their own policy, and the linguistic environment of English-medium schools can undermine attempts to make Irish the language of communication between the children.

special education

Education for children with a handicap or with learning or behavioural difficulties is provided by special schools. There is no specific provision for Irish-medium special education.

curriculum

The compulsory Core Curriculum subjects in English-medium primary schools are English, mathematics and science. Irish-medium primary schools have one more, namely Irish. All state-funded schools have a legislative requirement to offer Religion as a non-compulsory subject. Other subjects, History, Geography, etc. are compulsory but not examined at primary level, as are a number of cross-curricular themes. In English-medium primary schools Irish does not fall within the common curriculum and may be taught only as an option if a competent teacher is available in the time that remains after the other subjects have been dealt with. Independent (non-state-funded) schools are not required to follow the core curriculum.

examinations and assessment

CCEA has provided Irish-language assessment for Irish-medium schools in Irish, mathematics and science at the end of Keystages 1 and 2. An Irish-language Transfer Examination from primary to secondary education has been available since 1984 for those children who wish to apply for places in selective grammar schools.

teaching materials

A resource unit, originally funded by DENI, and now by the Belfast ELB, operates in *Bunscoil Phobal Feirste* in Belfast. The unit cannot meet the demand from Irish-medium primary schools for teaching materials. A policy review of the resource unit dealing with management, siting and access issues, has been initiated by DENI.

4 Secondary education

funding

Secondary schools, which provide a greater range of subjects than at primary level, require a higher enrolment in order to obtain state grant aid. Since 1991 DENI had accepted a long-term enrolment of 300 (60 pupils per annum) for the five years of compulsory secondary education, but is now also reviewing the viability criteria for secondary education. It proposes that "new secondary schools will be expected to achieve an opening enrolment of 100 pupils in Form 1 and demonstrate that they can sustain a long-term enrolment of 500 pupils." This will adversely affect the growth of Irish-medium secondary education except in streams.

statistics

There are two Irish-medium free-standing secondary schools, one in west Belfast and one in Derry. *Meánscoil Feirste* (Belfast) was established in 1991 and received funding in 1996. The school received interim funding from Making Belfast Work in 1995. *Meánscoil Dhoire* (Derry), established in 1994, does not receive any government funding. In 1996-1997, 219 children attended Irish-medium secondary schools. There are no Irish-medium streams in English-medium secondary schools. There are 236 English-medium secondary schools serving over 151,576 pupils. The latest figures for the number of pupils studying Irish are from 1988-1989, when it was calculated that 26,210 children were being taught Irish as a subject in Catholic schools. In 1996 2,215 pupils sat the GCSE examination in Irish and 296 sat GCE 'A' level examinations in Irish. These figures include adult learners

Irish in the curriculum

State-funded secondary schools are required to follow the Common Curriculum. Among the compulsory core curriculum subjects at secondary level is a requirement to study at least one modern language. Irish is accepted as a modern language for this purpose, along with French, German, Spanish and Italian. An attempt by government in 1988-1989 to exclude Irish from the list of admissible core curriculum modern languages at secondary level did not

succeed. Irish is the most commonly taught language after French, and is taught exclusively in Catholic and Integrated English-medium schools. A government-funded initiative organised by *Gael-Linn* to offer an introduction to Irish-language culture for pupils in Forms 6 and 7 in a number of non-Catholic Grammar schools have been in operation since 1994. It is hoped that this will result in the language being offered as a subject in a number of these schools. The medium of instruction in Irish-medium secondary schools for all subjects except English is Irish.

examinations and assessment

A special GCSE examination in Irish was provided for pupils in Irish-medium schools in 1993 by CCEA. In 1996, 28 pupils sat this examination. GCSE examinations through the medium of Irish for all subjects in Irish-medium schools were first provided for Irish-medium secondary schools in 1996. CCEA is now developing assessment materials in Irish for the Common Curriculum at secondary level (Keystages 3 and 4).

teaching materials

No resource facilities for developing teaching materials were made available for Irish-medium secondary education in 1996, and therefore must be produced by the teachers in the school. Teaching materials in Irish produced in the Republic of Ireland are often irrelevant to Irish-medium schools in Northern Ireland due to significant differences in the curriculum. However, some material produced in the Republic of Ireland is used in English-medium schools. Some teaching material for these schools has been published by ELBs. Other publishers, particularly *Preas Ultach*, have produced a range of textbooks for English-medium secondary schools.

additional instruction

Summer courses in the Irish language are provided by *Comhaltas Uladh* and *Gael-Linn* for secondary school children from both Irish and English-medium schools. These three week courses are held in Irish-speaking areas in Donegal in the Republic of Ireland and cater for a range of language abilities.

5 Vocational education

structure

Vocational courses are provided for 16 year old school leavers and those over 16 years of age. Some of the courses are provided in schools (sixth forms) and in Further Education Colleges. Vocational training is also provided by Training Centres, and community workshops in cooperation with employers who provide work experience. This training is not normally available through the medium of Irish.

statistics

In Northern Ireland there are 17 further education colleges. In 1995 they had a total enrolment (including academic courses) of 79,813.

language use

Forbairt Feirste, a Belfast-based Irish language economic development group, was established in 1996 and co-ordinates courses through the medium of Irish for clerical assistantce, computer skills, business development and media training. Training to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) level for Irish-medium preschool education is made available by *Altram*. Media and preschool training is conducted in both English and Irish. It is unlikely that the Irish language is used as a medium of instruction in training situations except in the above.

6 Higher education

structure

Higher education includes third level education at universities and Teacher Training Colleges.

statistics

In Northern Ireland there are two Teacher Training Colleges, St. Mary's (Catholic) and Stranmillis, and two universities: Queens University of Belfast (QUB) and the University of Ulster (UU). In 1995 the enrolment at the two colleges was 1,228 and that of the two universities was 37,223.

language use

The language of instruction at the four institutes for higher education is English although some institutions use Irish as

a medium of instruction for some or all of their courses in Irish and Celtic Studies. Irish as a subject is offered at St. Mary's College (Celtic Studies), at QUB (Celtic Studies) and UU (Irish Studies). Stranmillis College does not offer Irish. There is no information available as to the extent of use of Irish in informal situations.

teacher training qualifications

Teacher training provision is changing rapidly. Teaching qualifications at both primary and secondary level can be gained through the degrees of Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.), provided by the Teacher Training Colleges and at UU, or through a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) provided by all four institutes for higher education. A working party was established in 1986 to review teacher training provision. It was decided that initial teacher training for primary level was to be provided by the two teacher training colleges, and training for secondary level education was to be provided by both universities.
It is now proposed that the two teacher training colleges will provide B. Ed. qualifications only, and that the universities will provide secondary level PGCE qualifications, whereby the UU will concentrate on language teaching for primary level and the QUB on language teaching for secondary level.

training for Irish medium

In the past Irish teachers were trained to teach Irish as a subject in English-medium schools. A new post has been created in St Mary's College of Education to devise a curriculum for the training of teachers for Irish-medium schools.

7 Adult education

structure

Adult education within the statutory sector usually refers to institution-based or institution-validated courses directed at qualifications for students over compulsory school age which are not held at a university or teacher training college. Most institutions will provide Irish classes if demand can be demonstrated. However, the most

significant area of adult education relating to the Irish language is in the informal voluntary sector.

statistics

Statistics relating to the informal voluntary sector are extremely difficult to gather, and up-to-date statistics are not available. In 1985 there were over 70 adult classes outside the state educational system in west Belfast alone. In 1987, *Comhaltas Uladh*, the Ulster branch of the Gaelic League, calculated that around 3,500 adults attended its evening classes in Irish. *Comhaltas Uladh* also operates in four counties in the Republic of Ireland.

Irish courses

Some adult courses, aimed at secondary level qualifications are organised within the statutory adult education sector, There is no evidence that Irish as medium of instruction is used in this sector. However, most of the adult Irish-language courses are provided by voluntary organisations, and are not aimed at qualifications. Courses for adults are run by several organisations in the Donegal Gaeltacht in the Republic of Ireland during Easter and summer school holidays. Courses normally cater for three categories of learners: total beginners, intermediary and advanced. The following organisations run courses: *An Chrannóg*, *Comhaltas Uladh*, *Gael-Linn*, and *Oideas Gael*.

self-instruction

There are three self-teaching courses available in the Ulster dialect of Irish: *Cúrsa Closamhairc Gaeilge* by Risteard Mac Gabhann and *An Béal Beo*, published by BBC Northern Ireland have both reading material and audio cassettes. *Now You're Talking* published by Gill & Macmillan, is a multimedia Irish language package including a 250 page book, five 90 minute audio cassettes and a weekly television programme broadcast on BBC Northern Ireland.

teaching guides

A Guide for teachers of adult nightclasses is also available. *Abair Leat!* includes a comprehensive guide for teachers, material for a ten week course (language games, group work, flash cards, role-play etc), detailed class plans, simple explanations of the most central points of grammar.

Abair Leat! is aimed at teachers of total beginners, and is published by ULTACH Trust and *Údarás na Gaeltachta*.

8 Educational research

No information is available on current research in the field of Irish and education. Except for a planned research project on early language acquisition in Irish-medium schools, little pedagogic or linguistic research has been carried out related to course planning, teaching materials, or the socio-linguistic issues relevant to the Irish language. There are few indications that such research will be undertaken in the near future.

9 Prospects

primary

It is expected that the Irish-medium sector will grow. As most children attending the present Irish-medium schools are in the junior classes, the number of children attending existing schools will at least double in the next five years. Some additional primary schools are planned. However, the proposal announced by DENI to raise the viability criteria for state-funding will make access to public funding for free-standing Irish-medium schools much more difficult to achieve.

Irish streams

It is expected that the number of Irish-medium streams in English-medium schools will therefore increase,particularly outside the large urban centres of population. As DENI has not yet developed a policy to support the setting up of Irish-medium streams, it is impossible to predict the rate of growth in this area. It is, however, likely that streams will develop only within the Catholic maintained sector. Resources and instructional material are at present underfunded. Plans to develop a comprehensive support structure for Irish-medium education are being considered by DENI.

secondary

A number of integrated secondary schools now offer Irish as a subject, and some non-Catholic secondary schools are making plans to have the language taught. A further increase in those taking examinations in Irish may be expected, although this may also reflect an increase in adult learners of the language.

vocational training

Vocational training related to the Irish language is a very recent phenomenon. An increase in the number and range of courses available will depend on the level of demand.

higher education

St Mary's College of Education is in the process of providing a course for teaching in Irish-medium schools.

10 Summary statistics

Type of Education	Number		Enrolment	
	Irish	English	Irish	English
Preschool	20	634	548	15,839
Primary	12	948	1,017	190,787
Secondary	2	236	219	151,576
Further education	17		79,813	
Teacher Training	2		1,228	
Universities	2		37,223	

Table 1: Number of schools and enrolment in Northern Ireland divided over Irish and English medium education. It should be noted that Irish medium streams in English schools are not specified.

Endnotes

1. Source: European charter for regional or minority languages. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. November 1992. (European Treaty Series/Série des traités européens; 148).

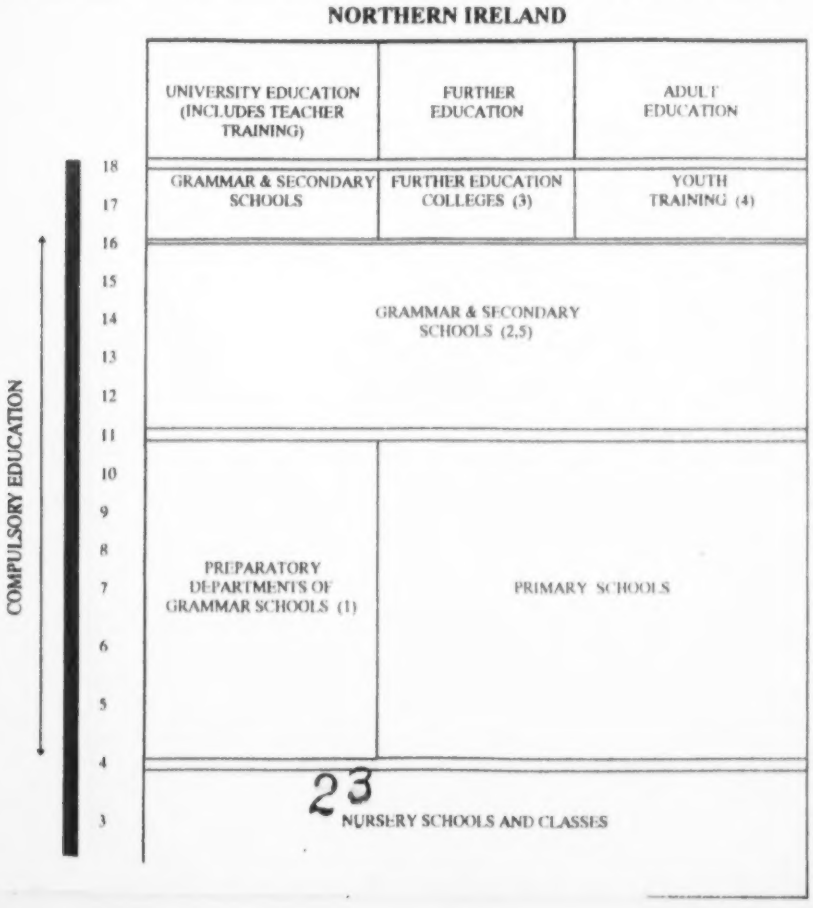
2. This document called "Structures of the education and initial training systems in the European Union" has been prepared jointly by EURYDICE and CEDEFOP, the European centre for the development of vocational training. Address: EURYDICE European Unit , Rue d'Arlon 15 , B - 1050 BRUSSELS. Tel. + 32 - 2 - 238.30.11 Fax. + 32 - 2 - 230.65.62. Internet address: http.//europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg22/euryen.html

3. Source: Northern Ireland Census, op. cit. p. 159. These figures are likely to be an overestimate but are very significant nevertheless.

4. England, Wales and Scotland are often referred to as Great Britain.

5. Information provided in this section is largely based on the description about Northern Ireland p. 373-376 and p. 398-404 in *Structures of the education and initial training systems in the European Union*, developed by EURYDICE and CEDEFOP (1995) and based on interviews with civil servants from DENI October-November 1996.

Outline of the educational system in Northern Ireland. Source: EURYDICE Structures of the education and initial training systems in the European Union.



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